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New spy charges

By Nick Davies

An MI5 officer was charged yesterday with three offences under Section One of the Official Secrets Act, including one which alleges that he passed on an official assessment of Russian intelligence activities in the United Kingdom.

Michael Bettaney, aged 33, who has been in custody since September 16 on a holding charge, is also accused of passing on information about the expulsion of three Soviet citizens and of collecting information which was calculated to be useful to an enemy.

The charges were laid against Mr Bettaney in the cells at Bow Street magistrates' court, where he had just been remanded in custody for a further seven days on the original holding charge of preparing to communicate secrets.

Mr Bettaney is understood to have been working for the Ministry of Defence on secondment from MI5, the counter-espionage agency which is responsible for protecting national security interests and installations.

He now faces six charges which cover the period from December 31 last year to the day of his arrest. Under Section Seven he is charged with making precise arrangements to pass secrets on April 3 and on June 12, and with pressing



Michael Bettaney :
six charges

for a response to his proposal of April 3 and June 12.

Under Section One, which carries a maximum sentence of 14 years' imprisonment, he is charged with collecting information useful to an enemy over the whole period, communicating information about the expulsion of three Russians on April 3, and communicating an official assessment of Russian intelligence services operating in the UK on June 12.

None of the charges specifies the alleged recipient of the information. At yesterday's hearing Mr Bettaney agreed to be remanded in custody each week in his absence until December 5, when he is due to appear in court again.